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XIII.—ANIMALS IN EARLY ENGLISH ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE, 650-1500

The chief general fact we need notice concerning the animals appearing in our ecclesiastical literature between 650 and 1500 is their double responsibility, to God and man. Toward God their duty is accomplished when, like the birds of St. Francis,¹ they have duly rendered to Him their chorus of praise and thanksgiving. Man they must serve, first, as examples; second, as illustrations to his reflective mood of spiritual truth; third, by direct personal ministration to him.

The first point is obvious in so far as animals exhibit, for man's emulation, sterling virtues: prudence, obedience, etc. Less inevitable, and therefore more interesting, is the fashion in which they are made to exemplify adherence to strictly ecclesiastical prohibitions or prepossessions. This may be illustrated by the animals loyal to churchly scruples in regard to technical cleanness and uncleanness: the swine, for instance, that would not defile himself by eating the bread tossed him by an excommunicated clerk;² or the ass that refused to pollute holy ground by bearing to it for burial a usurer's body.³ Along other lines, also, animals thus exhibit nice regard for formal churchly prescriptions.

Passing directly to those animals used by writers for man's intellectual enlightenment, we find that the sources

¹ *Early South English Legendary*, p. 63, lines 329-335, ed. by Carl Horstmann, London, 1887. (E. E. T. S., 87.)

² *Jacob's Well*, pt. I, p. 35, lines 13-21, ed. by Dr. Arthur Brandeis, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 115.)

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-199.

whence these illustrative beasts are drawn are chiefly three: the animal kingdoms existing respectively in the actual world, in the monkish imagination, and in the Bible. They are used figuratively, the figures varying from the simplest and most conventional to the most ingeniously elaborate, as in the case of the bird which appears, at one extreme, in a bald statement likening Mary to Noah's dove,¹ and, at the other, in the following highly wrought simile. Speaking of Anna and Joachim, parents of the Virgin, the writer says, "And trewly god loued this maner wedlocke so moche. that he ordeyned to take therof. the mooste honeste mother of his manhod. . . . Therefore as an egle that flyeth on hye in the ayre. and beholdeth many woddess. shulde se one tre a far so sewrely rowted that yt myghte not be rente up wyth eny blastes of wyndes. and the body of the tree were so longe and euen. that no man myghte clymbe up therby. whiche stode also in suche a place that yt semed vnpossyble that eny thyng shulde falle thervpon from aboue and the egle bysely beholdynge this tree. shulde make therein hys neste. wherein he wolde reste: so god to whome thys egle ys lykened. to whose syghte all thinges presente and to come .are clere and open: whyle he behelde all the rightwys and honeste wedlockes. that shulde be from the fyrste makeynge of man .vnto the laste day. he se none lyke in godly charyte and honeste .vnto the wedlocke of Joachym and of Anne. . . . therefore yt plesed hym that the body of hys mooste honeste mother whiche is vnderstoned by the neste shulde be bygotten of thys holy wedlocke. in whiche body he hymselfe shulde vouch safe to reste with

¹ *Poems of William of Shoreham*, p. 127, lines 13-15, re-ed. by M. Konrath, London, 1902. (E. E. T. S., Ex. Ser. 86.)

all conforte.”¹ Sometimes both the conventionality and the strain vanish entirely and we have sheer simple beauty, as in the *Ancren Riwele*, where the anchoresses are likened to “briddes of heouene þet . . . sitteð singinde murie oðe grene bowes.”² It is noticeable that, when our writers are using Scripture animals, there is seldom any evidence of this lovely and poetic imagination. They then exhibit only a desperate ingenuity which endeavors to extract from its sacred subject every particle of didactic significance. The grotesque lengths to which their zeal pushes them is sometimes startling to the modern reader, as when the white Paschal Lamb of the Old Dispensation is said to symbolize Christ roasted in the sun and borne on the platter of the Cross.³

The figurative use of animals in the Bestiaries differs from the figurative use with which we have just been dealing in that there is always attached to these Bestiary creatures more or less fabulous quality or characteristic. They are at least one channel to the “unnatural natural history” of Lyly. It is interesting to note echoes of the completed Bestiary poems, and to broaden the background for these completed poems by jotting down instances of animals treated after the fashion of the Bestiary, namely, with mythical traits and with expository intent. The Lion of the regular Bestiary reappears in *Cursor Mundi*.⁴ One

¹ *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, pp. 207-208, ed. by J. H. Blunt, London, 1873. (E. E. T. S., Ex. Ser. 19.)

² *Ancren Riwele*, p. 132, ed. by James Morton, London, 1853. (Camden Society, 57.)

³ *Dispute between Mary and The Cross*, in *Legends of the Holy Rood*, pp. 136-137, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1871. (E. E. T. S., 46.)

⁴ *Cursor Mundi*, pt. III, lines 18639-18660, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1876. (E. E. T. S., 62.)

trait of him is used most curiously by Orm. In interpreting Ezekiel's vision of the four beasts seen by the prophet around the throne of God,¹ he interpreted the lion's face as standing for the apostle Mark, since he

“ . . . wrat uss onn hiss Goddspellboe
Hu Crist ras upp off dæpe ”; ²

and this fact makes it natural, says Orm, with his peculiar logic, to attach the lion's face to the man who wrote about this fact, since

“ . . . leness whellp þær þær itt iss
Whellpedd, tær liþ itt stille
Þre dazhess alls itt wære dæd
Forr Cristess dæp to tacnenn.” ³

Of the whale, mermaid, and elephant of the Bestiaries reminiscences occur, of the first in the *Vita sancti Brendani*,⁴ of the others in *The Ayenbite*.⁵ These are the only echoes of the regular Bestiary poems that I have found. But the method of the Bestiary, namely, the handling of mythical animals, or mythical traits of animals, with expository purpose, is frequent. The flatterer, for instance, is likened to the farrowed sow, which, it appears, “bleþeliche byt men: y-cloþed mid huyt,” since the flatterer too “yerneþ op to þe goude”;⁶ the miser, to a por-

¹ Ezek., ch. i, 5-10.

² *Ormulum*, lines 5830-5831, ed. by Robert Meadows White, Oxford, 1852.

³ *Ibid.*, lines 5838-5841.

⁴ *Early South English Legendary*, p. 224, lines 153-174, ed. by Carl Horstmann, London, 1887. (E. E. T. S., 87.)

⁵ Dan Michel's *Ayenbite of Inwyrt*, pp. 61, 224, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1866. (E. E. T. S., 23.)

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

cupine, which gathers apples with his prickles.¹ Most interesting, in William of Shoreham's *Five Joys of The Virgin*, is the use of the fabulous Unicorn to illustrate Christ incarnate in Mary, of which animal the legend declares that, though it could not be captured, it would freely lay itself in the lap of a pure maiden.²

Coming now to our third point, namely, direct service rendered by animals to man, we shall find certain animals distinguished by abnormal sensitiveness and intelligence wherever man is concerned. The stories illustrative of their loving service to famous saints like Cuthbert are too well known to bear repetition. Unrecognized hitherto, I think, has been the fact that we can mark in the saints' legends themselves the evolution of this sympathetic attitude as distinguished from the mere perfunctoriness of their Biblical analogs—the lions of Daniel, for instance, concerning whom the writer says, "God hath sent his angel and hath closed the lions' mouths." In Ælfrie's *Lives of the Saints*, the gray wolf that guards from other beasts St. Edmund's head, thrown out among the brambles, likewise acts merely by divine compulsion.³ In the *Old South Legendary*, where this story is told, however, there is no mention of God's command; and the writer dwells on the fact that the wolf licked the head, and kissed it as if it were its own whelp.⁴ It is hard to refrain from further illustration of this point by means of the variant

¹ *Jacob's Well*, pt. i, p. 117, lines 17-19, ed. by Dr. Arthur Branderis, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 115.)

² *Altengl. Sprachp.*, 1 bd. 1 abth., p. 262, lines 109-114, ed. by Eduard Mätzner, Berlin, 1867.

³ Ælfrie's *Lives of Saints*, pt. iv, p. 324, lines 154-157, ed. by W. W. Skeat, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 114.)

⁴ *Early South English Legendary*, pp. 298-299, ed. by Carl Horstmann, London, 1887. (E. E. T. S., 87.)

stories of St. Vincent's black bird with swift wings,¹ and of St. Mary of Egypt's lioness.² It must suffice us, however, to call attention to the fact that between the divinely constrained lions of the Biblical story of Daniel, and the loving, wistful creatures that, in *King Solomon's Book of Wisdom*, "leneden in-to his barme,"³ lie all the lapsing, brooding hours of monastic seclusion, in the shadows of which holy men made amends to themselves for dearth of human relationship by dreaming of creatures whom it is no sin to love and be loved by.

In some rare instances animals assume towards man an attitude of almost austere direction or exhortation. An example is furnished by the solicitous camel that earnestly exhorts the people as to the proper manner of burying St. Damianus and St. Cosmos.⁴

We have noted thus far three types of animals: the wholly normal type, the animal differentiated from the normal by singular form or fabulous trait, and the animal approximating to human nature in its emotional and intellectual sympathy with man. If we take one further step, we find ourselves among animal shapes that are merely masks assumed by spiritual beings good and bad. The

¹ *Old English Martyrology*, p. 28, lines 22-23, re-ed. by George Herzfeld, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 116); *Early South English Legendary*, pp. 188-189, ed. by Carl Horstmann, London, 1887. (E. E. T. S., 87.)

² Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, pt. III, pp. 50-52, ed. by W. W. Skeat, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 94); *Early South English Legendary*, p. 270, lines 320-337, ed. by Carl Horstmann, London, 1887. (E. E. T. S., 87.)

³ *Solomon's Book of Wisdom*, in *Dreams about Edward II*, p. 89, lines 242-244, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, London, 1878. (E. E. T. S., 69.)

⁴ *Old English Martyrology*, p. 182, lines 2-8, re-ed. by George Herzfeld, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 116.)

dove is the most popular animal form assumed by the holy. On Biblical precedent it is the Holy Ghost that chiefly adopts it, though this form is also very commonly assumed by angels; and it is sometimes difficult to know from the context which of these two varieties of spiritual essence is thus disguised. A tenet of certain of the Scholastic philosophers suggests a possible solution in such hitherto doubtful cases as that of the snowy portentous little creature descending from heaven to breathe into St. Gregory's ears the wisdom expressed in his books.¹ This tenet assigned to angels, as one special function, the imparting of abstract knowledge from God to man.² This definitely assigned function, in contrast to the office definitely assigned to the Holy Ghost, namely, the inclining of the will by love to true good,³ would seem to indicate the angelic quality of Gregory's dove and kindred creatures.

Not only the third person of the Godhead, and the angels, but also the souls of dying saints, assume the form of a dove. One instance of this seems especially significant as being a most poetic and lovely development of the famous and conventional parting-address of the soul to the body. ". . . . sona swa hig man heafdode, þa com þær fæger culfre of þam lichaman ond fleah ymbe þone lichaman ond hyne freode ond þa fleoh to heofenum."⁴ In this highly imaginative form, at least, we have the presence in English Literature of an Address of a *Good*

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38, lines 20-23.

² *Of God and His Creatures* translation of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Bk. III, ch. 91, pp. 251-252, by Joseph Rickaby, S. J., St. Louis, Mo., 1905.

³ *Ibid.*, Bk. IV, ch. 33, pp. 354-355.

⁴ *Old English Martyrology*, p. 216, lines 28-30, re-ed. by George Herzfeld, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 116.)

Soul to its Body—the existence of which has never been recognized.

Sometimes angels reveal themselves under the forms of birds other than the dove. In the *Old English Martyrology* we read concerning St. Wilfred, “. . . þa he his gast ageaf, þa com sweg suðan eastan of þære lyfte swa swa micelra fugla sweg, ond gesetton on þæt hus þær he inne wæs.” The writer adds in explanation “þæt wæs þara engla flyht þe hine to heofonum læddon.”¹ This passage, conceiving as it does the assumption of the forms of birds by the angels whom we so often find gathering lovingly round the dead body or accompanying the soul on its way to heaven, throws an interesting light upon the hitherto puzzlingly blithe nature of the passage in the *Old South Legendary*, where the larks alight singing merrily upon the church in which St. Francis’s body is lying.² I think the poet, in this instance, is wrong in his interpretation of this incident as illustrating merely the devotion of animals to St. Francis. This rejoicing of the larks, perplexing if we regard them as genuine birds losing their gentle patron, becomes natural if, originally, they were disguised angels like the ones we just noted in the case of St. Wilfred.

The saints glorified in heaven, also, sometimes assume the forms of birds to come to the aid of the saints on earth. The favorite form assumed by these glorified souls was, apparently, the eagle’s. We read that St. Benet, “fadir and lanterne of Cisteus ordir, apperyd to hir [Mary of Oegines] as wynged, and spradde his wynges aboute hir. And

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62, lines 7-9.

² *Early South English Legendary*, p. 67, lines 455-461, ed. by Carl Horstmann, London, 1887. (E. E. T. S., 87.)

whanne hee hadde sitten longe wið hir in þe chauncelle of þe chirche, and she askyd what-maner wynges þoos were, hee answeyrd: þat hee as an egyle þurgh hye fliynge come to hy and sotil þinges of holy writte 7 þat oure lorde hadde openyd to hym many þinges of heuenly priuetis.”¹ Again, when St. Mary sat weeping in deep contrition for her sins, “she sawe an egil vpon hir breste, þat as in a welle plunged the bile in hir breste and filled the ayere wiþ grete noyse; ¶ and she undirstode in spirite þat blessed Johne bare awaye hir weylynge 7 wepynge.”² It is possible that this at least occasional assumption of the eagle’s form by the glorified saints may be due to the current mediæval interpretation of the four strange beasts appearing to Ezekiel in a vision. “And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; and they four also had the face of an eagle.”³ Mediæval tradition takes these four beasts each with the four faces, gives each beast one face apiece, turning one into a man, one into a lion, one into a calf, and one into an eagle; and makes the man stand for Matthew, the lion for Mark, the calf for Luke, and the eagle for John, since John dwelt chiefly in his book on Christ’s divinity and, thus dealing with such high things, “flæh upp inntill heoffne . . . full lic wiþþ ærn þatt fleþheþ full heþe.”⁴

¹ *Prosalegenden*, ed. by C. Horstmann in *Anglia*, VIII, p. 174, lines 12-17.

² *Ibid.*, lines 19-25.

³ *Ezek.*, ch. I, 6-10.

⁴ *Ormulum*, lines 5885, 5888-5889, ed. by Robert Meadows White, Oxford, 1852.

John's preëminence among the saints may well have determined the form assumed by them in their earthly visitations. The reference to John himself in one of the passages quoted, and Benedict's assumption, in the other, of sublime knowledge, would seem to support this supposition.

Of mere human beings appearing in the form of animals there are few instances. We have a singular instance of a metaphor turned literal fact. The term "hound" applied to non-Christians is jadingly conventional; and it is therefore with distinct interest that we read of the unique heathen, afterwards St. Christophorus, who "hæfde hundes heafod, ond his loccas wæron ofer gemet side, ond his eagan seinson swa leohte swa morgensteorra, ond his teð wæron swa scearpe swa eofores tuxas."¹ In another instance we see a human being displaying a canine characteristic, namely, at the church-service where, in answer to the priest's prayer, those receiving the sacrament unworthily were divinely impelled to publish their sin by some physical manifestation. Those who "gnapped here fete and handes, as doggës doun þat gnawe here bandes," thus proclaimed themselves backbiters.²

Turning to diabolical beings, we find ourselves often greatly at sea as to the precise animal shape any given devil assumes, since in mediæval times the terms "draca," "wyrn," "næddre," "snaca," with their variant forms, are used more or less interchangeably. By careful comparison of many passages I have decided that these perplexing words may denote, at least, either a serpent-

¹ *Old English Martyrology*, p. 66, lines 17-20, re-ed. by George Herzfeld, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 116.)

² Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, pt. II, lines 10197-10236, re-ed. by F. J. Furnivall, London, 1903. (E. E. T. S., 123.)

bodied ¹ dragon, with or without wings, and with or without flames; a magical sea-serpent; ² or the creature we call serpent.³ These creatures are usually found in hell,⁴ their function being to torture lost souls by rending and tearing—a conventional torture suggested no doubt by the analogous tearing and rending of the body by worms after death, of which motive we have such gruesome expansion in Old and Middle English Literature.⁵ Newts,⁶ toads,⁷ hounds,⁸ and falcons⁹ join them in this horrid function, while horses¹⁰ and camels¹¹ vary proceedings by other forms of torture.

There is one perplexing point about these punitive creatures. At what period, and in what manner, did they enter, in literature, upon their special function? Are they really devils at all—that is, of genuine diabolic ancestry? May they not be merely grotesques snared into

¹ *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, ed. by B. Assmann in Grein-Wülker, *Bibl. d. ags. Prosa* III, p. 175, lines 182-186, Kassel, 1889.

² *Cursor Mundi*, pt. IV, lines 23226-23232, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1877. (E. E. T. S., 66.)

³ *Cursor Mundi*, pt. II, lines 11608-11609, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1875. (E. E. T. S., 59.)

⁴ *Cursor Mundi*, pt. IV, lines 23231-23232, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1877. (E. E. T. S., 66.)

⁵ *Samml. Engl. Denkm.*, 4 bd., 1 abth., p. 140, line 24, p. 187, line 14, ed. by Arthur Napier, Berlin, 1883.

⁶ *The XI Pains of Hell*, in *An Old English Miscellany*, p. 67, line 271, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1872. (E. E. T. S., 49.)

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 224, line 60.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154, line 245.

⁹ *The Revelation to the Monk of Evesham*, ch. 33, p. 75, in *English Reprints*, ed. by Edward Arber, London, 1869.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ch. 41, p. 85.

¹¹ *The XI Pains of Hell*, in *An Old English Miscellany*, p. 215, lines 145-148, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1872. (E. E. T. S., 49.)

service of devils from out the realms of romance—nickers from *Beowulf*, hounds from Hades, wing-clipped steeds from the chariots of the gods, dragons from cathedral-cornices, falcons from castle-courts? A constant distinction seems to be made by the writers between them and the devils *par excellence*. They are sometimes definitely called the “*deuilis bestis*.”¹ In one place, beside a pool of hell, stands a troop of fiends *in propria persona*, egging the sea-serpents on towards their prey.² Fiends *in propria persona* likewise take the initiative in the case of a man mentioned in *The Mirror of The Periods of Man's Life*, stirring on hell-hounds to bite him.³ Later we watch these hell-hounds bark at and “baite” him while “*þe feendis writiþ . . . faste*” his sins in little books.⁴ In another uncanny tale a knight riding homeward one evening meets a dead woman fleeing through the moonlight in her smock and clouted shoes. “*þei herdyn fro ferre*,” we read, “the voys of feendys lyche þe voys of hunters and of here houndys, wyth orryble hornys and cryes.”⁵ Here, as in the cases before mentioned, and many others, there seems an obvious distinction between a fiend proper and the animals that do his will.

These punitive beasts which, if further reading support this suggestion, have not at all legitimate devil-ancestry, but merely obey the behests of devils, as a rule confine their operations to hell, only rarely accompanying their

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 212, line 54.

² *Ibid.*, p. 149, lines 81-89.

³ *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, in *Hymns to The Virgin and Christ*, p. 70, lines 397-398, ed. by F. J. Furnivall, London, 1867. (E. E. T. S., 24.)

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77, lines 597-599.

⁵ *Jacob's Well*, pt. I, pp. 166-167, ed. by Arthur Brandeis, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 115.)

masters earthward in the relation of hound to hunter. The devils proper, however, wander over earth assuming various animal shapes, those of wolves,¹ foxes,¹ owls,² bats,³ etc. The most interesting case is that in which, in the story in the *Old South Legendary* of St. Edmund,⁴ the animal forms assumed, namely those of ravens tossing from beak to beak an evil soul on its way to punishment, mark the final stage in the evolution of the devil with the Spear and Fork, whom we are apt to find accompanying evil souls on the grim journey to hell.⁵ Behind these devils there stretches, if we may accept a recent well supported theory, an interesting history, their prototypes being the animal-headed genii of pagan Egyptian lore who encountered the soul on its way to the underworld, and who crept into early Christian Egyptian legends as agents whose duty it was to superintend the passage of the soul from the body.⁶ At this point Egyptian philosophy and Egyptian myth unite to place in the hands of some of these agents forks by which the evil soul is forcibly removed.⁷ Later the significance of the forks is lost sight of, the superintending demons merely using them as a means of torturing the soul on the way to hell.⁸ Thus

¹ *Old English Martyrology*, p. 192, lines 15-16, re-ed. by George Herzfeld, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 116.)

² *The Revelation to the Monk of Evesham*, ch. 21, p. 51, in *English Reprints*, ed. by Edward Arber, London, 1869.

³ Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, pt. II, lines 11862-11868, re-ed. by F. J. Furnivall, London, 1903. (E. E. T. S., 123.)

⁴ *Early South English Legendary*, p. 437, lines 195-202, ed. by Carl Horstmann, London, 1887. (E. E. T. S., 87.)

⁵ *A disputeson between the body and the soule*, ed. by Hermann Varnhagen in *Anglia*, II, pp. 241-242.

⁶ L. Dudley, *The Egyptian Elements in the Legend of the Body and Soul*, pp. 47-48, Baltimore, 1911.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

far the theory referred to carries us. I would suggest that the further and final step in the evolution of these devils with forks, and ultimately of the Egyptian animal-headed genii, is their transformation into the hovering birds above referred to, that St. Edmund saw tossing about a man's soul like a "luyte blac sak," their beaks answering to the forks of earlier tradition.

This leads us naturally to our last point concerning disguised devils. We have seen that fiends might assume the forms of various animals. They also appear occasionally in human forms.¹ In all these instances, however, there has been an evident transformation from some typical form. What was that typical form? How did a fiend look unmasked, as one might find him behind the scenes without his make-up, or lounging on an off-day at home in hell, or when on his expeditions earthward he was entirely willing to be recognized as a devil indeed? Does he then have any place in a paper dealing with animals? When I asked myself this question I found that I had no definite idea of the appearance of the typical devil as conceived of in literature carrying on purely ecclesiastical tradition. The shaggy creature of early religious drama, the red, tailed one of later stage tradition, the Black Man of witch-lore, left me quite confused as to what the churchly writers had in mind when they spoke, for instance, of the "horryble peple whiche had speres and swerdes" who were seated in the old temple in diabolic midnight conclave.² I had always distrusted the statement that the red devil was the result of striving

¹ *A dispitison betwene a god man and þe deuel*, in *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, pt. I, pp. 329-330, ed. by Carl Horstmann, London, 1892. (E. E. T. S., 98.)

² *The Invention of the Holy Cross*, in *Legends of the Holy Rood*, p. 159, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1871. (E. E. T. S., 46.)

for stage-effect, and expected to find that devils in their constant proximity to hell flames would very early begin to redden a little, just as, in anticipation of these flames, lost souls on their journey to hell began, very early in stage tradition, to slip on small red coats. I was, however, mistaken. The early dualism of black and white holds its own to the end of my period. By putting together passages¹ I have evolved the plain ecclesiastical devil, not red nor tailed nor shaggy, but erect like a man, cavern-eyed, horned, hoofed, with either claws or hands, sometimes winged and flaming. Such grotesque half-animal shapes, it is fair to imagine, thronged round the dying sinner,² or said over his dead body their weird Psalter for his soul.³ And surely these "blak forschapen þinges,"² so constantly present in this literature, have a place among our animal grotesques.

We have spoken thus far of animals or half-animals singular in appearance or trait or endowment. Incidentally there have also appeared animal shapes of gold or brass or other metal, some very lovely, like the birds that, adorning vessels and dishes at kings' tables, were so skillfully wrought that it seemed as if they "with wynges upon wynde . . . waged her fyþeres."⁴ These artificial creatures, while charming in themselves, are chiefly inter-

¹ *Ibid.*; *Death*, in *An Old English Miscellany*, p. 183, lines 225-248, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1872. (E. E. T. S., 49); Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, pt. II, lines 12182-12191, re-ed. by F. J. Furnivall, London, 1903. (E. E. T. S., 123); *Elene*, in Grein, *Bibl. d. ags. Poesie*, II (Text II), p. 126, line 900, Goettingen, 1858,

² *Orlogium Sapientie*, ed. by K. Horstmann in *Anglia*, x, p. 363, lines 9-10.

³ *Jacob's Well*, pt. I, pp. 138-139, ed. by Arthur Brandeis, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 115.)

⁴ *Cleanness in English Alliterative Poems*, p. 79, line 1484, ed. by R. Morris, London, 1864. (E. E. T. S., 1.)

esting as leading us straight into the realms of magic. We read of a golden dove which, hung on the altar, stirred its wings when Basil said mass.¹ Christ as a child made sparrows of clay which, at his command, took their flight "over all þis world."² Such things our writers record with the tenderest and most naïve devotion. They frown, however, and pour out bitter denunciations upon the heathen wise man beneath whose hands brazen adders writhe as if alive,³ and who created magical dogs that, springing out upon the apostles, fall back before the sudden presentation to them of holy bread.⁴

We have several times had occasion to refer to our various writers' dealing with animals in the Scriptures. These references have fallen under two chief heads: first, the use of Scripture animals as allegorical figures; second, reminiscences of them through poetically created analogs. In yet other ways do our writers render vivid for us the creatures somewhat colorlessly mentioned in the Scriptures: first, they deliberately embroider Biblical narrative; second, they create concrete narrative to illustrate Biblical generalization; third, they lend Bestiary color to a Biblical animal; fourth, they amplify a Biblical statement by reference to the natural philosophy of the day.

To deal with the first point. Sometimes this touching-up of Scripture story consists in the addition of a mere detail calculated to intensify its sensational interest.⁵

¹ Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, p. 58, lines 126-131, ed. by W. W. Skeat, London, 1881. (E. E. T. S., 76.)

² *Cursor Mundi*, pt. II, lines 11985-12002, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1875. (E. E. T. S., 59.) See, also, *Gospel of Thomas*.

³ *Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, vol. I, p. 376, ed. by Benjamin Thorpe, London, 1844.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 376-378.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 570.

Sometimes the embroiderings are detailed and elaborate, occasionally very beautiful, as in the telling of the story of Noah, where the mere statement of the going out of the animals from the ark at the subsidence of the flood is turned into a scene of really thrilling *mêlée* and confusion, as the liberated creatures speed joyfully back to their native haunts.¹ Quaintly comic, on the other hand, yet doubtless most seriously conceived, is the passage in the *Cursor Mundi*, dealing with the cock whose crowing aroused Peter to sense of his disloyalty to Christ.² Passing into the hands of Judas's mother, this cock appears before Judas, nicely boiled, as the *pièce de résistance* at dinner. In answer to his mother's reproaches for his betrayal of Christ, and her prophecy that Christ will rise again to judge the world, Judas boastfully declares that Christ will no more rise from the dead than the cock on the platter will arise and crow. Whereupon,

Unnethe had he said þe word,
 þe cok lepe vp and flight
 Federd faryer þan beforn
 And cru thoru grace o dright.

In both the slight and the elaborate embroidery of Scripture narrative, classical influence is often apparent. The myth of Orpheus affects David's story, the poet representing the sheep as thronging around David when he plays his pipe.³ The myth of Midas influences the golden-calf story.⁴

¹ *Cleanness* in *English Alliterative Poems*, p. 52, lines 528-539, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1864. (E. E. T. S., 1.)

² *Cursor Mundi*, pt. III, lines 15961-15998, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1876. (E. E. T. S., 62.)

³ *Ibid.*, pt. II, line 7407-7411, ed. 1875. (E. E. T. S., 59.)

⁴ *Ibid.*, lines 6615-6636.

The Scriptural "undying worm" is, in one place, touched by the myth of Prometheus in that the organ it tortures is constantly renewed for its further feasting.¹ In the poem *Patience* it is hard not to suspect, in the telling of the whale story,² the influence of Lucian's sea-monster one hundred and seventy miles long, in whose interior the adventurous mariners discovered not only the suggestion of a hall, but temples, cities, and forests.³

I said that another way of vivifying Biblical animals was to create narrative to illustrate Biblical generalization. Thus the prophecy, "Dragons shall praise the Lord," is fulfilled in the *Cursor Mundi* by a charming little story in which, in the flight into Egypt, serpents gliding suddenly out of a cave "lout low" under the feet of the little Christ.⁴

An interesting illustration of the next point, namely, the lending of Bestiary color to a Scripture animal, occurs in the *Ancren Riwele* where the author, in dealing with the scorpion to whose bite Solomon is fond of likening the gnawing of remorse attendant upon a vicious career, says significantly, "þe scorpiun is ones cunnes wurm þet haueð neb, ase me seið, sumdel iliche ase wummon, ʒ is neddre bihinden, makeð feir semblaunt, ʒ sikeð mid te heaued, ʒ stingeð mid te teile." ⁵

¹ *The XI Pains of Hell*, in *An Old English Miscellany*, p. 152, lines 183-186, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1872. (E. E. T. S., 49.)

² *Patience*, in *English Alliterative Poems*, pp. 96-98, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1864. (E. E. T. S., 1.)

³ *Veræ Historiæ in Luciani Samosatensis Opera* iv, pp. 274-322, ed. by J. T. Lehman, Lipsiae, 1823.

⁴ *Cursor Mundi*, pt. II, lines 11608-11618, ed. by Richard Morris, London, 1875. (E. E. T. S., 59.)

⁵ *Ancren Riwele*, p. 206, ed. by James Morton, London, 1853. (Camden Society, 57.)

The habit of turning creatures mentioned in Bible-narrative into specimens for exposition of the science of the day, is well illustrated by the passage in the *Old English Martyrology* dealing with the statement, "On the fifth day God created all kinds of swimming fishes and flying birds." Here we learn that this day was the twenty-second of March, and that water was the material used. The writer goes on to say: ". . . æghwelc fugal wunað þæt þæt he of gesceapen wæs: þa swimmað nu á on seal-tum yðum þa þe of þæm gesceapen wæron, ond þa wuniað on merum ond on flodum þa þe of þæm ferscum wætre gescæpene wæron, ond þa sittað on feldum and ne magon swimman þa þe of þæs græses deawe geworht wæron, ond þa wuniað on wudum þa þe of þæra treowa dropum gehiwode wæron, ond þa wuniað on fænnne þa þe gewurdon of þæs fænnnes wætan." ¹

To summarize: In English ecclesiastical literature between 650 and 1500, animals served man, first, as examples both of moral virtues and of scrupulous observance of churchly punctilio; second, as illustration of religious truth, the use of them here being metaphorical, and ranging from the most obvious simplicity to the most strained though sometimes beautiful elaboration; third, as friends, stress being laid on the distinct evolution of this attitude from the perfunctoriness of their Bible analogs. We next pass to a type where the animal nature vanishes entirely, and we find ourselves among animal forms assumed by spiritual beings, light being thrown upon the significance of some of these disguises by hints from scholastic philosophy, Biblical allegory and pre-Christian Egyptian legend. At the opposite extreme from

¹ *Old English Martyrology*, pp. 44-46, re-ed. by George Herzfeld, London, 1900. (E. E. T. S., 116.)

the use of it as disguise for spiritual beings, we find the animal form copied in clay or metal, quickened into life, in many cases, by miracle or magic. Centering our attention finally upon the animals appearing in the Bible, we find that besides using them metaphorically, and creating for them highly intelligent analogs, the writers weave around them narratives, lovely or grotesque, influenced often by classical suggestion; lend to them Bestiary color; or make them the center of the natural philosophy of the day. In short, the conclusion of the whole matter is an evident attempt on the part of our churchly writers to vivify for the people in various ways spiritual truth and religious story.

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